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Historical Address

ON THE

Early Exploration and Settlement of the Mississippi Valley.

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The Mississippi Valley.

HE country we now occupy on this western bank of the Mississippi, and of which, as American citizens, we are justly proud, has not descended to us as a rich inheritance from a venerable and time-honored ancestry. By an historic movement grander than that of the Jewish Exodus, and an irruption that throws into the shade the Norman conquest, we are the present possessors of a land unknown to our fathers. Even during the present century, and within the memory of living men, this Trans-Mississippi region has borne the name of a French monarch and acknowledged the sovereignty of a Spanish king. Through what series of changes the present state of things, as now passing before our eyes, has been brought about, would seem not altogether devoid of interest to us, the now living actors, and will be of not less interest to those who shall come after us. Desirous to contribute something, however meagre, to this historic fund, I have endeavored to bring together, in chronological order, some of the principal events in the early exploration and settlement of the Mississippi Valley, and to weave into my narrative such incidents as I have been able to gather up from the limited sources at my command, having any direct reference to our local history.

It is a matter of regret — though perhaps in the nature of things unavoidable — that, in the bustle and excitement of frontier life, the most favorable conditions are not afforded for a calm and dispassionate view of the true character and

distinctive features of our aboriginal Indian population. Being regarded mainly as obstacles in the way of advancing civilization, or, commercially, as a source of immediate gain, neither the settler, the trader, or even the missionary, are qualified to give us an unbiased view of the original possessors of the soil we now occupy. Hence, the materials for a correct history have to be laboriously exhumed out of one-sided military reports, prolix missionary narratives, fragmentary newspaper sketches, and fugitive correspondence accidentally preserved. As yet, no historical Agassiz or Hitchcock has appeared to reconstruct these dim tracks into living history. Hence, in our attitude as simple inquirers, we can hardly do better than to take the advice of a western writer, who, in alluding to the obscure subject of Indian antiquities, remarks: "We are standing in the midst of monuments that are *dumb*; let us *keep questioning*—they may hereafter speak to us."

Viewed only from the present standpoint, the past history of the aboriginal races on this continent presents no attractive features; it is but a record of continued, persistent, and relentless destruction. Except in the pages of romance, its whole history may well be written in *blood*. Even the precious seed of the Gospel, heroically sown and carefully nurtured, has fallen upon an unfruitful soil, save here and there a few scattered sheaves worthy to be gathered into the heavenly garner; *all else* presents a scene of moral waste and desolation, more repulsive and less hopeful than that which externally characterizes the most barren of our interior desert wastes. Turn we from this dark picture.

In the early civilized history of this continent, three great European powers occupied almost exclusively the domain of history. Spain, France, and England, extended their wars, their rivalries, and their enterprises, from the old world to the new, and in the midst of their incessant and varied contests, the cradle of American civilization was

rudely rocked. Spain, in the first period of American discovery the most enterprising, confined her attention mainly to the southern countries, and stretched her bloody and victorious arm over the weak and luxurious natives of torrid climes. Most of her northern expeditions proved complete and disastrous failures, and De Soto, the first discoverer of the Mississippi, three hundred and thirty years ago, found only an unhonored grave beneath its waters. France, following later in the track of her enterprising fishermen, gained her first permanent foothold on the northern American coasts and islands; thence penetrating, by the navigable route of the St. Lawrence and the chain of northern lakes, to the interior districts, from whence the Upper Mississippi was eventually reached. English colonies at first occupying the intermediate country along the Atlantic seaboard, eventually as the result of fierce and continued wars dispossessed the other European powers, and extended her dominion over the greater part of eastern North America.

To French enterprise solely is due the credit of the earliest exploration, and the first permanent settlements along the whole course of the Mississippi Valley. Fortunately, the record of this first discovery is full and complete, as we now proceed to note.

Nearly two hundred years ago — on the 17th of June, 1673 — two bark canoes, containing barely eight persons, entered the Mississippi river. Their route was by an almost continuous water passage, by way of Green Bay, on Lake Michigan, ascending the Fox river, of Wisconsin, to its upper marshes, where, by a short portage, the canoes were transferred to the waters of the Wisconsin, thence, by an easy descent, reaching the Mississippi river. The chief member of this exploring party, though not its actual leader, was Father James Marquette, a Catholic priest, who, with self-denying zeal, had devoted his life to missionary labor among the western aboriginal tribes. His associate,

and the official head of the expedition, was *Sieur Jolliet*, a native of Canada, a man of enterprise and tact, well qualified for the position to which he had been assigned, at present geographically commemorated by the thriving Illinois town which bears his name. On the swelling tide of the June rise, these adventurous travelers pursued their journey down the course of this majestic stream, to which the present name, under a slightly changed orthography (*Michisipi*), was then applied. The peculiar features of the country on either hand drew their earnest attention, while they were oppressed by the death-like silence that brooded over its unpeopled shores. By the third or fourth day they must have passed Rock Island, of which, however, no special mention is made. The rapids being then covered up by the swollen waters, also seem not to have attracted attention.

At some point not far below the present town of Keokuk, on the 25th of June, an Indian trail is noticed on the western shore, leading from the river bank across the narrow neck of land between the Mississippi and Des Moines rivers. Intent on acquiring some knowledge of the inhabitants adjoining this wonderful but apparently deserted stream, the two adventurers left their canoes in charge of their attendants, and followed the track six miles, to an Indian village on the banks of the Des Moines. Here their hazardous enterprise was rewarded by being kindly received and hospitably entertained by the no less wondering natives. After a prolonged stay of six days, during which Father Marquette improved the opportunity to speak to them by expressive signs both of the French king, and the Great Heavenly Master, they again started on their voyage, being escorted back to their canoes by a large retinue of warriors. On their final parting, they received as a gift an ornamented peace-pipe, to be used as a sacred calumet against the foes and dangers to which they might be exposed on their route.

The voyage continues without hindrance or mishap, passing the mouth of the Missouri, noted in the map accompanying Marquette's narrative as *Pekitanoui*, or the "Muddy Water." They glide on the swift and now turbid current past the then unoccupied site of the present metropolis of the Mississippi Valley—St. Louis—along the great American Bottom, soon after to receive the first permanent French settlers. Farther on, the mouth of the Ohio is passed, and beyond the slightly bluffs on which Memphis is now located. Then comes the monotonous, densely-wooded shores, and the interminable cane-brakes, where oppressive heat and tormenting insects add their discomforts to the unattractive scenery. After passing below the mouth of the Arkansas, and encountering different races of Indians, not altogether friendly, and being fully satisfied that the course of the river was to the Gulf of Mexico, and not as represented—into the South Sea, or the Pacific Ocean—they considered that the chief object of their journey was accomplished. In order, therefore, not to expose the results of their journey to unnecessary risk, they concluded to return, and, retracing their course up the Mississippi as far as the mouth of the Illinois, they were guided by a still more direct water communication up that stream to the head of Lake Michigan; and, having accomplished a traveled distance of over twenty-five hundred miles, reached their starting-point at Green Bay in September, after an absence of just four months.

On his return voyage to Quebec, Jolliet was so unfortunate as to lose the notes of his journey, barely escaping with his life, by the wreck of his boat in crossing the rapids of the St. Lawrence. This disaster served to give additional value to the narrative of Marquette, which, having been duly transmitted to his ecclesiastical superiors, on the month following his return, was subsequently forwarded to the French authorities. France, however, was not at this time in a con-

dition to avail herself of the advantages thus offered by her enterprising sons to extend her dominions over the Mississippi valley, and accordingly no official action was taken to perfect the discovery. But among those occupying the frontier settlements along the line of the Great Lakes, to whom this discovery was communicated, was Robert Cavalier de La Salle, then living at Fort Frontenac, (now Kingston), Canada. This man, possessed of indomitable natural energy, and ambitious of securing wealth and distinction, conceived the idea of securing these ends, by colonizing this new region, and planting the standard of France in this magnificent valley. Full of these schemes, in the year 1678 he went to France, where, in presenting his plans before the French government, he had no difficulty in procuring a royal commission with full powers and privileges for carrying out his designs. On returning to this country he immediately set about his preparations, and in 1679 launched the first sail vessel on Lake Erie. On August 7th, of the same year, he set sail on his adventurous journey. On reaching the extreme settlements of Green Bay, he concluded to send back his vessel loaded with furs, for additional supplies, while he continued his journey in bark canoes along the east shore of Lake Michigan, as far as St. Joseph river, to which point he had given directions for his vessel to return. While waiting here impatiently this expected arrival, the cold season was rapidly advancing, and the severities of an approaching winter awakened anxious fear and solicitude. Unable longer to bear this intolerable suspense, this resolute commander resolved to push forward with the slender means at his command, in the direction of his proposed exploration. Accordingly, on the 3d of December, 1679, he proceeded with his party by the return route of Marquette, six years previously, passing up the St. Joseph river in Michigan, crossing by a portage to the Kankakee, branch of the Illinois, and down the latter stream. He found the Illinois

valley then, as in the time of Marquette, occupied by various bands of the Illinois tribe of Indians. Here his superior tact and abilities were brought into active requisition to conciliate the friendship and good-will of this powerful tribe, and succeeding in this, he located his winter quarters in their midst, at some point not far from the present site of the town of Peoria. As an expression of his bitter disappointment in the present failure of his plans, he gave the name of *Creve-cœur* (or broken heart), to the first civilized settlement in the now flourishing state of Illinois.

The details of this gloomy and disheartening winter can be better imagined than described, but nothing could daunt the resolute spirit of La Salle; having given up all hopes of the safety of his vessel, on which he was dependent for the means of continuing his explorations, he organized a party under Father Louis Hennepin, the missionary priest, to ascend the upper Mississippi. This Reverend Father, who, subsequently, by his false and contradictory statements, received the not very dignified title of "The Great Liar," so far successfully carried out the plans of his commander (whom he never afterwards met alive), as to ascend the Mississippi in the following season, 1680, as far as the falls of St. Anthony, so named by him. After making all due allowances for the subsequently proved unreliable character of the man, his published narrative of what he actually did see, cannot properly be overlooked in what purports to give a true history of the early explorations of the Mississippi valley.

After completing these arrangements and making the best provision possible under the circumstances for his party, La Salle, on the 2d of March, 1680, accompanied by four Frenchmen and an Indian guide, started overland en-route to Canada, for necessary supplies. This arduous journey, performed on foot and in the most disagreeable season of the year, was successfully accomplished, though no de-

tailed record has been published of the difficulties and hardships of the trip. On reaching Fort Frontenac, La Salle lost no time in pushing forward his enterprise. Another vessel was built, and abundant supplies furnished, this occupying the greater part of the year 1680. By the close of the year he again reached the Illinois country, to find his fort abandoned, and his party broken up. The winter and part of the following spring of 1681 was spent in conciliating the good-will of the various Indian tribes, in which being successful, he again returned to Canada to reorganize his exploring party, and returned at the close of the season fully equipped for his long-delayed undertaking. Finally on the 6th of February, 1682, he reached the mouth of the Illinois, and thence following down the Mississippi beyond the explorations of Marquette, he crowned his ambitious hopes by planting the banner of France at the outlet of this majestic stream, with appropriate imposing ceremonies, on the 9th of April, 1682, the adjoining country then for the first time receiving the name of Louisiana. Thus by his persevering efforts, continued in spite of disheartening disasters, for four years, was accomplished a complete examination of the entire navigable waters of the Mississippi, from the falls of St. Anthony to its mouth, one hundred and ninety years ago.

After his return an interval of two years elapsed, during which time La Salle returned to France with the news of his discoveries, and organized a large colonizing expedition, designed to reach this country by sea.

In July, 1684, the fleet, composed of four vessels, set sail from France. This expedition, taking a southern route, landed at San Domingo. Here occurred the misfortune of the loss of one of the vessels loaded with goods and supplies, being captured by a Spanish force. The three remaining ships having laid in a store of provisions, and taking on board a number of domestic animals designed to stock their

colony, weighed anchor November 25th, 1684, and proceeded on their voyage toward the mouth of the Mississippi. After safely rounding the western cape of Cuba, they made land to the north, but by some misunderstanding missed the mouth of the Mississippi, and following westward in search of it, along the gulf coast, reached Metagorda Bay, Texas. Here, on attempting a landing, La Salle's store ship was wrecked and went to pieces; discouraged by this loss, one of the other two remaining vessels abandoned the expedition, thus leaving La Salle with but one, short of supplies, to prosecute his enterprise. Subsequently, by mismanagement of the pilot, this last ship was also wrecked on the Texan coast, and La Salle was left, with a remnant of his disheartened party, to make his way by land to the Illinois country. In this journey La Salle was killed by a mutineer of his party, on the 17th of March, 1687, and eventually only a few forlorn individuals of the original expedition reached the banks of the Mississippi. Thus closes the eventful history of La Salle, the explorer of the Mississippi valley.

The disastrous result of this well devised and energetic enterprise for the settlement of the Mississippi valley might have been supposed to dampen the ardor of French civilization; but it proved far otherwise. Every new country seems to require a certain amount of pioneer blood to fertilize its soil, and thus prepare it for the vigorous growth of the seeds of a higher civilization. The knowledge thus acquired of this magnificent country, with its broad avenues of trade, its prolific soil, and varied climate, could not fail to excite new enterprises, and from this time forward succeeding the death of La Salle in 1687, up to the close of the seventeenth century, permanent French settlements were established in the Illinois country, of which the present towns of Kaskaskia, Cahokia, and Peoria are the true lineal descendents. On the 2d of March, 1699, D'Iberville, the

daring arctic explorer of Hudson Bay, and afterwards the first regularly appointed French governor of Louisiana, entered the mouth of the Mississippi from the Gulf, this being the first authentic record of a regular sailing vessel reaching lower Louisiana by this route.

With the close of the seventeenth century, and the ushering in of the year 1700, we leave behind the romance of discovery and adventure, and enter upon the more commonplace details of civilized history. The Mississippi river is no longer a mythical stream, affording, it may be, an outlet to the South Sea and the Indies. Its navigable waters have been accurately traced, and its principal tributaries have been laid down in published maps. The nature of the country through which it flows, and the aboriginal tribes that occupy its banks have been described in more or less detail, though it must be admitted, too often clothed with exaggerated features. It is a wilderness to be redeemed from heathenism to Christianity, and where to all appearances French civilization will establish a permanent foothold in the new world. The men to accomplish this great work were being educated in the cloisters of the Catholic church, or trained to endurance in the rude school of Canadian frontier life. It would be difficult to find elements more promising for attaining grand results; every thing seemed to point to French supremacy. Spain was absorbed in her rich southern dependencies, and English colonies were but slowly struggling into permanent settlement along the Atlantic seaboard. In the west, France was without a rival; her policy of ingratiating the good will of the aboriginal tribes, by generous treatment, and securing their respect by the imposing ceremonies of a religion addressed largely to the senses, preserved the early French settlers from many of the dangers to which Spanish cruelty, and English overbearance, exposed their respective colonies. Hence, we find little to record in the matter of Indian wars

and bloody massacres of defenceless settlements. Still the country was difficult to reach, and means of conveyance were expensive and hazardous, rendering the progress of settlement slow and uncertain. It was under these circumstances that the French government, desirous of promoting a more rapid growth, in accordance with the views then prevalent, granted a monopoly of the trade of the country for fifteen years, to a successful and wealthy merchant, M. Crozat, this grant bearing date September 14th, 1712. After an unsuccessful experience of five years, during which Crozat, instead of realizing immense wealth, only diminished his private fortunes, and failed to add to the growth and prosperity of the country, he surrendered his grant, which passed into the hands of an organization known as the Mississippi Company, under the management of a celebrated financial schemer, John Law, a visionary Scotchman. The ostensible plan of this company was to enrich every body connected with it by a gigantic system of credit, based on undeveloped mineral wealth and agricultural resources yet unrealized. The first effect of this scheme was greatly to encourage emigration; glowing prospects were held out to the settler of sudden wealth attained without labor, and independent of capital. Hence, at this period we note the location of some of the principal towns of Lower Louisiana, including New Orleans, dating from 1720, Natchez, as early as 1716. Upper Louisiana was too far removed to share to any considerable extent in these enterprises, though mining schemes were extensively projected in the lead regions of Missouri and the Upper Mississippi valley. The final collapse of this bubble, which, after a nominal existence of barely fifteen years, finally exploded, though necessarily disastrous to those directly engaged, who had at the commencement anything to loose, nevertheless, to the country at large, left some permanent benefits, among which we may enumerate a manifest increase of population, more at-

tention given to agriculture, as well as the addition of such staple articles of production as rice, sugar, and tobacco in the south, and wheat in the Illinois country. As one of the darkest shades upon this bright side of the picture, we are also compelled to note the first introduction of negro slaves into Louisiana, under the auspices of the Mississippi Company in 1719. It was during this period of time also, that Spanish jealousy made itself conspicuous by encroachments on the French colonies, both on the east and west, from Florida and Mexico. The year 1729 was memorable for the massacre of the French colony at Natchez, by the Natchez Indians, who were provoked to this act by repeated insults and injuries received from the French military authorities. In the following year this flourishing tribe was in its turn almost completely extirpated, only a miserable remnant of survivors being sent to end their days as slaves in San Domingo. Subsequent to the failure of the Mississippi scheme, the country gradually increased in population and wealth. The period of time from 1732 to 1754, being regarded as the palmy days of French settlement in the Illinois country. Here is what a French writer, Vivier, writes of Illinois, in a letter dated June 8th, 1750 (*Annals of West*, page 38) :

“We have here whites, negroes, and Indians, to say nothing of cross-breeds. There are five French villages, and three villages of the natives within a space of twenty-one leagues, situated between the Mississippi and a village called the Karkadiad (Kaskaskias). In the five French villages are perhaps eleven hundred whites, three hundred blacks, and some sixty red slaves or savages. The three Illinois towns do not contain more than eight hundred souls, all told. Most of the French till the soil, they raise wheat, cattle, pigs, and horses, and live like princes. Three times as much is produced as can be consumed, and great quantities of grain and flour are sent to New Orleans.”

At this latter period commencing with the year 1754, the history of the western country becomes involved in the bitter and relentless wars between France and England for American supremacy. France at the first, occupying the most advantageous ground, became the successful aggressor, and was then engaged in carrying out the grand military design of maintaining a continuous line of forts from Canada to the Mexican Gulf, including the head of navigation on the Ohio. It was at this time occurred the memorable defeat of Braddock, in attempting the capture of Fort Du Quesne, July 9th, 1755. It was in managing the retreat from this disaster, that the military genius of Washington was first brought into notice. A few years later, in 1757, occurred the massacre of Fort William Henry, on Lake George, a survivor of which, Captain Jonathan Carver, as we shall presently have occasion to note, made an early exploration of the Upper Mississippi Valley, and published a very full and accurate account of its geography and natural resources.

Following these early successes however, the French were doomed to a continued series of most disastrous defeats, culminating in the treaty of Paris, of 1763, by which France surrendered to Great Britain all her North American possessions east of the Mississippi, including the whole of Canada, with the exception of some small fishing islands off the Gulf of St. Lawrence, still held by France, which together with certain West India possessions, comprises all that this great European power now controls in the western hemisphere. Cotemporary with this important event in the history of the Mississippi Valley, we have to note an additional secret treaty, concluded between France and Spain, the year previous, November 3rd, 1762, by which the former ceded to Spain all her possessions west of the Mississippi, including the country we now occupy, and the Island of Orleans, this controlling the outlet of the Mississippi river.

The exact terms of the treaty (which Nicolet characterizes as "the everlasting-shameful one") were never published, and the fact was first made known to the inhabitants of Lower Louisiana, in October, 1764. It was not till the year 1770, that Spanish authority was definitely established in Upper Louisiana.

The mortification of the French settlers on the eastern bank of the Mississippi, including the Illinois country, in being thus unceremoniously transferred to the rule of their old historic enemies, the English, had a manifest effect in hindering the progress of settlement, and whole communities left their homes, to seek others more congenial in Lower Louisiana, or on the west bank of the Mississippi, soon to pass under the less detested rule of Spain.

On account of the isolated situation of the country, and especially the active opposition of the Indian tribes, who in cherishing kind regards to the French, extended a no less cordial hatred to their aggressive enemies, the English, military occupation of the country was delayed till July 17th, 1765. It was at this period that the celebrated Indian warrior, Pontiac, with his confederated Indian tribes, waged a bloody and exterminating war through all the English settlements west of the Alleghenies. St. Louis, the present metropolis of the Upper Mississippi valley, also had its origin in these unsettled times, having been selected by a Mr. Laclède, as the headquarters of a French fur trading establishment, its first actual occupation dating back to February 15th, 1764. A very interesting account of the early history of St. Louis is contained in Nicolet's report on the Upper Mississippi valley, published by Congress, in 1845. Thus have we traced a brief outline of the history of French occupation of the Mississippi valley, covering a period of ninety years, from the discovery of Marquette, in 1673, to the treaty of Paris, of 1763. It may be briefly summed up in the sparse and widely separated line of settlement in the

immediate valley of the Mississippi, including New Orleans, Natchez, Kaskaskia, Cahokia, Ft. Chartres, and the trading post of Prairie du Chien.

JOINT SPANISH AND ENGLISH OCCUPATION OF THE
MISSISSIPPI VALLEY.

We now come to note the era of Spanish and English occupation of the Mississippi Valley, continuing in the latter only to the close of the revolutionary war in 1783, while Spanish rule extended to the date of the re-transference of Louisiana from Spain to France, and its purchase soon after by the United States, in 1803.

With the accession of British authority and the introduction of an English-speaking people, soon to merge into the great American Republic, we are put in possession of authentic narratives and descriptions of the country, by which the thread of historical events may be most conveniently traced. It must be admitted that previous accounts by French writers are, as a general rule, tinctured by their exclusive national or political views, and indicate not unfrequently a disposition to conceal the true state of things, and thus keep from other rival nationalities an exact knowledge of the actual resources and capabilities of the country they aim to monopolize. Hence some of the early French maps are purposely inexact, and many of the published narratives were nothing but wholesale fictions. Furthermore, it is not to be wondered at that the French, in surrendering the fruits of their dearly earned discoveries to the possession and control of their old and hereditary enemies, should decline to communicate the knowledge thus obtained, or even to mislead by positive untruths. Such at least are the uncontradicted statements of cotemporary English writers and travelers.

Among the narratives especially worthy of attention in the way of authentic information of this part of the country, including especially the upper Mississippi, is that of Capt. Jonathan Carver, an officer in the American provincial army in the French war, and one of the survivors of the terrible Indian massacre of Fort Wm. Henry, in 1757. With the close of the war this enterprising traveler undertook a journey of exploration to these remote western regions, prompted by the following laudable motives, as stated in the introduction to his published narrative, from which I quote:—

“No sooner was the war with France concluded, and peace established by the treaty of Versailles, in the year 1763, than I began to consider (having rendered my country some services during the war) how I might continue still serviceable, and contribute as much as lay in my power to make that vast acquisition of territory gained by Great Britain in North America, advantageous to it. It appeared to me indispensably needful that government should be acquainted in the first place with the new dominions they were now become possessed of. To this purpose I determined, as the next proof of my zeal, to explore the most unknown parts of them, and to spare no trouble or expense in acquiring a knowledge that promised to be advantageous to my countrymen,” etc., etc.

The narrative following this frank and straight-forward introduction, considering the time in which it was written, (over one hundred years ago), is certainly worthy of more credit than it has generally received. In his statements of the general features of the country, its scenery, and natural productions, there is even less of exaggeration than in many of the books of the present day. The principal localities there referred to can be readily located, and the exactness of description fully verified. It is in this view of credibility, as applied to the general aspects of the country, that especial

value attaches to his accounts of the Indian tribes of that region, some of which had hardly before been visited by civilized men. His views moreover of the future of this country were far in advance of his time, and sound in a measure almost prophetic, as may be seen from the following extract (Introduction, p. 28):—

“To what power or authority this new world will become dependent after it has arisen from its present uncultivated state, time alone can discover. But as the seat of empire from time immemorial has been gradually progressing towards the west, there is no doubt but that at some future period mighty kingdoms will emerge from these wildernesses, and stately palaces, and solemn temples with gilded spires reaching the skies, supplant the Indian huts whose only decorations are the barbarous trophies of their vanquished enemies.”

From the body of the narrative, we learn that in the year 1766, the route of Marquette in 1673, by way of Green Bay and the Fox and Wisconsin rivers, had already become a well-known avenue of trade with the Indian tribes of the northwest. That Prairie du Chien, so named by French traders, was then occupied as a central point for supplies, and a general rendezvous for meeting the various Indian tribes occupying the upper Mississippi, whose navigable waters, no longer silent and deserted as at the time of Marquette's discovery, afforded a ready means of conveyance both north and south. In pursuing his journey to the northwest, Capt. Carver passed up the Mississippi from Prairie du Chien, by the same mode of conveyance as that used by Hennepin in 1680—bark canoes, and reached the Falls of St. Anthony late in the fall of 1766. Early in December of that year, he followed up the St. Peters river, and spent that winter with some bands of the Sioux Indians occupying winter quarters north of the great bend of this river. Here, according to his narrative, he was engaged in observ-

ing the customs of these Indians, learning their language, and acquiring such geographical knowledge of the region of country to the west as might be available in the prosecution of his great scheme of penetrating to the Pacific Ocean. His published map, made up from these various sources of information, was in point of accuracy far in advance of any before published, though necessarily defective in reference to the remote districts, in regard to which he had to depend upon the exaggerated statements of Indians, whose information was conveyed by means of rough maps, traced with charcoal on sheets of bark.

In the following season, not succeeding in his design of procuring the necessary outfit and goods for prosecuting his journey across the continent, he returned to Prairie du Chien, and from there again ascended the Mississippi as far as the Chippewa river, followed up the latter stream, and by a succession of portages reached Lake Superior, where most of the summer and fall months of 1767 were spent in exploring its northern shores.

It was in the course of these various journeys, that Capt. Carver, who, with genuine Yankee sagacity seemed to have been particularly attracted by the picturesque region on the east bank of the Mississippi, lying between the Falls of St. Anthony and that beautiful expansion of the Mississippi known as Lake Pepin, secured from the Indian chiefs occupying this district, a grant of land, included in the above limits, and extending eastward four days journey, reckoned in round numbers at one hundred and twenty miles, thus including a large portion of the present states of Wisconsin and Minnesota. This large grant, duly attested and signed, only needed the confirmation of the British Crown to secure to its possessor a lordly domain, in extent and value equaling the broad patent of Charles II. to William Penn. To secure this rich prize, Carver, on the completion of his journey in 1769, sailed for England and laid his papers and

petition before George III. Unfortunately for the success of this scheme, the difficulties which eventuated in the war of American Independence interposed delays and subsequent failure, and Carver, unable to secure his claim or to receive any compensation for his services from the British Crown, died in actual poverty in 1780, in London, soon after the publication of his travels.

This so-called Carver's grant was afterward transferred to various parties, and was brought before the United States Congress with a view to the ratification of Carver's claim, but for want of sufficient evidence, was reported against and the claim disallowed. A very full and condensed documentary history of this claim is contained in Vol. VI. of Wisconsin state historical collections, lately published. The war of American Independence, which so seriously interfered with Capt. Carver's land speculation in the northwest, produced little outward effect in the sparse and remote settlements of the Mississippi Valley, except doubtless in checking emigration.

There was at this time little to encourage military occupation among the peaceful French settlers of Illinois, while at the same time the outlet of the Mississippi and its western bank was under the military rule of Spain, then in hostility with Great Britain. In this condition of affairs, England was content with holding a menacing attitude towards the northwest from her strong-hold at Mackinaw, and the possession of Detroit, which was maintained through the war.

Only two prominent events directly connected with the history of this region need arrest our attention during this eventful period, viz: The successful attack on St. Louis, by British and Indian forces, in 1780, and the military occupation of Illinois, by Col. George R. Clark, of Virginia. The attack on St. Louis, then, of course, under Spanish rule, was directly instigated as a matter of retaliation for the part

taken by Spain in favor of the independence of the United States: the friendship of Spain in this instance, being due more to hatred and jealousy of England, than any sincere love for the struggling American republic. The attack was planned as a surprise, and was so far successful in finding the inefficient military forces unprepared for defence. The date of the attack as given by Nicolet was May 6th, 1780. The Spanish garrison consisting of not more than sixty men, did little or nothing in the way of defence, which was resolutely made by the inhabitants of the place, including both men and women. The number of the assailants was estimated at nearly one thousand. The resistance was so vigorously conducted that the attacking force was obliged to retreat, and in so doing, wreaked their vengeance on the unprotected outside settlements, when not less than sixty persons were killed, and thirteen taken prisoners. This defence of St. Louis, which if the attack has been successful, would have involved according to the experience of those times an indiscriminate slaughter of its inhabitants, has been partly ascribed to an active interference by American troops, then in possession of the British forts on the east bank of the river, but according to Mr. Nicolet, there is no reliable evidence in support of this statement, though doubtless, Americans, in their private capacity as citizens of St. Louis, took a prominent part in resisting the attack.

The capture and retention of the British forts in the Illinois country, and on the Wabash, was a military enterprise, planned and successfully carried out by Col. George R. Clark, of Virginia, under written instructions from Patrick Henry, the eloquent orator, then governor of that state. Fort Kaskaskia was taken by surprise, on the 4th day of July, 1778, and on the 24th of February following, 1779, the British fort at Vincennes was also captured, thus effectually putting an end to British military occupation in this portion of the west. An interesting detailed account of this adven-

turous expedition of Col. Clark, is contained in the Annals of the West, covering the period of 1778 and 1779.

With the acknowledgment of American independence by the treaty of 1783, the east bank of the Mississippi valley, as far south as 31° north latitude, became an integral part of the United States territory, while Spain still retained her possession of the west bank, including the navigable outlet of this valley. This ill-defined boundry, especially objectionable in the control thus given to Spain, over the free navigation of the Mississippi, was the cause of much disagreement, naturally increasing with the progressive advance of settlement in the upper country. Spain, from the first, jealous of the progress of the new republic, established on her very borders, whose institutions were so at variance with all her policy and national exclusiveness, used her position to check this growth, and if possible, break up the federal union. In this view, she placed obstructions on commerce, denied the right before guaranteed of free navigation of the Mississippi, and insidiously fostered, and directly encouraged plans for the secession of the southwest. Nothing but the weakness of the federal union prevented actual hostilities, which, on several occasions, nearly reached a crisis. In fact, near the close of the elder Adams's administration in 1800, a United States military organization was fitted out for the capture of New Orleans, and the execution of this military movement was only prevented by the accession of a new administration under Jefferson. Under these uncertain and discouraging circumstances extending to the close of the eighteenth century, the interests of the entire Mississippi valley were seriously injured, but with the opening of the present century, the complication of European politics again opened up the way for the extension of American authority over the entire Mississippi valley. Spain, fearing the loss of her extensive colonial possessions to the south, by a secret treaty with France, dated in 1802, transferred to

that power, then under the military rule of Bonaparte, her entire possessions in the Mississippi valley, including Upper and Lower Louisiana. By this treaty, the soil we now occupy, after an interval of about forty years of Spanish rule, again passed under the control of France. Napoleon, at this time, absorbed in his gigantic schemes for establishing the French empire and controlling the policy of Europe, found little opportunity to attend to the interests of a distant colony, and thus, fortunately for the cause of American republicanism, the formidable coalition of the European powers obliged this ambitious military ruler to concentrate all his efforts on European soil. Hence, after little more than a year's nominal jurisdiction, he disposed of this newly acquired territory of Upper and Lower Louisiana to the United States for \$15,000,000.

The date of December 20th, 1803, by which the final transfer was made by France to the United States of this trans-Mississippi region, marks an event which may worthily occupy the first page of a history which in the succeeding seventy years progress, has astonished the world.

Jefferson, the master spirit in bringing about this new acquisition, was not only a far-seeing statesman, but an eminently practical man, and to his wise policy we are mainly indebted for the series of government explorations inaugurated by him for determining the actual character and resources of this western region. It would be but a just commemoration of the early services of this great statesman, to **affix the name of Jefferson to some well defined state** to be carved out of these rapidly developing western territories, to include, if possible, under natural boundaries, the head sources of the grand rivers flowing east and west from the great continental water-shed.

With the era of western explorations commencing with the adventurous journey of Lewis and Clark, in 1804-5-6, to the Pacific ocean by way of the head waters of the Miss-

ouri and the Columbia rivers, we come to notice as directly connected with the progress of settlement in the Mississippi Valley, the expedition of Lt. Pike, in 1805-6, from St. Louis to the supposed head waters of the Mississippi.

In this succinct and quaintly written narrative, we get a clear and connected view of the natural aspects and civilized development of this region, after a lapse of one hundred and thirty-two years from its first discovery by Marquette. St. Louis, then, as now, recognized as the metropolis of this Upper Mississippi Valley, having thrown off the shackles of Spanish exclusiveness, had commenced its permanent growth as an American city. From this point (while Lewis and Clarke's expedition was still in progress) Lieut. Pike started on his journey up the Mississippi river on the 9th of August, 1805. His outfit occupying a single-keel boat, comprised a party of twenty men and provisions for four months. The journey, necessarily slow and laborious except when aided by a favorable wind, allowed frequent shore excursions by hunting parties, generally accompanied by Pike himself. Thus the character of the adjoining country came under the careful inspection of this intelligent explorer. The map accompanying his report lays down, with considerable accuracy, the main features of the region thus passed over, including river tributaries, high points of land, open prairies, Indian villages, &c., &c. The distances are also carefully noted in the daily journal, interspersed with occasional remarks and suggestions, serving to give a life-like character to the narrative. By an unforeseen accident, two men of the party, making their way by land along the Iowa shore, just below the island formed by the Muscatine slough, were cut off from the main river channel, and thus separated from the boat party. In this dilemma they did not succeed in joining their comrades till they were picked up by some trading parties, and brought as far as Prairie du Chien. These two men, whose names are not given in the

narrative, may therefore claim the credit of being the first settlers on Iowa soil.

On the 27th of August the mouth of Rock river is reached, and a camp made about four miles above on the west bank, which must have brought them in the vicinity of Davenport, probably on the land at present owned by Mr. Hall, or Judge Cook. In the account of this day's journey there is a note made of passing a pole on a prairie on which five dogs were suspended in preparation for an Indian dog feast. Such feasts, on a still more extensive scale, might at this day be enjoyed not far from the site of Davenport, without much cause for regret to the majority of its civilized inhabitants.

Early on the morning of August 28th Lieut. Pike reaches the foot of the rapids, where he encountered a *Mr. Aird*, a Mississippi fur trader, and accepts an invitation to a late breakfast. Mr. Aird is here delayed, waiting for his loaded boats to be piloted over the rapids, and thus (fortunately for Pike) the brief interval of the morning meal is improved to obtain all the information possible from this enterprising trader. Under these circumstances, it is to be feared that this first recorded Davenport breakfast was not up to the times of the Grand Central Hotel, being more of an intellectual than a substantial repast. But the wind is now fair for an ascent of the rapids, and Pike, after a cordial parting, spreads his blanket to the breeze, and sails up the rapids without delay or hindrance. At the head of the rapids is located a village of the Reynard Fox Indians. From this on, over the beautiful stretches of river scenery so familiar to all of us, including the rocky bluffs below Dubuque, and the ever-varied scenery above, Prairie du Chien is reached, on September 4th, this being the first permanent settlement on the entire route above St. Louis—and this less than seventy years ago! On the high rocky bluff on the Iowa shore, not far from the present site of the town of Mc-

Gregor, Pike selected the site of a military post, which, however, was never occupied as such.

On September 21st, the mouth of the St. Peters is reached, and after some time spent in that vicinity, negotiating with the Indian tribes, and securing the site for a military post, since known as "Fort Snelling," he commences the arduous trip above the Falls of St. Anthony, encountering all the vicissitudes of a winter campaign in that inclement region, the details of which would occupy too much time. Suffice it to say, that the supposed source of the Mississippi was reached, its course mapped out, and the character of the extensive lakes and marshes of this district fully made known. Pike's return voyage was completed on the 30th of April, 1806, after an absence of nearly nine months.

Not many years succeeding Pike's expedition occurred the second war with England, generally known as "The war of 1812." Among other causes leading to this renewed hostility between the two countries was a most flagrant interference by British traders with the Indian tribes of the northwest, then under the jurisdiction of the United States. In fact, not only the English fur traders, whose business was likely to be curtailed by the active competition of American citizens, but the British frontier military authorities used all their influence to promote hostility between the various Indian tribes and the enterprising settlers then pushing their way into the inviting northwestern country. Nor was this interference confined to misrepresentation of the character and designs of the United States government, but to the actual furnishing of arms, ammunition, and supplies for prosecuting their murderous attacks on the feeble settlements of the west. Thus the Indian rifle, whose startling peals woke the forest solitudes, bringing dismay and death to many a hardy frontiersman, and the tomahawk, crushing through the brain of defenceless victims, were manufactured

in English shops, and formed a not inconsiderable item in the ordinary supplies for the Indian trade. Under these circumstances, the war of 1812, generally regarded in historical annals as a maritime contest, presented far other features to the enterprising settlers of the west. To them it implied a fearful aggravation of the difficulties and dangers by which they had been constantly surrounded, as well as the liability to open attack from those whose hostilities had been confined to more underhanded measures, in instigating others. Nor had they to wait long for these open manifestations. Mackinaw, the key to the northwest, then occupied by a weak garrison of barely fifty-seven men, was captured by a British force on July 17th, 1812, before the news of an actual declaration of war had reached that remote station. In less than a month after (August 16th), Detroit was also disgracefully surrendered by its incompetent commander, General Hull. Still more disastrous was the retreat and massacre at Ft. Dearborn (Chicago), occurring on the 15th of August of that same year. In this retreat, fully equalling in barbarity the massacre of Ft. Wm. Henry in 1757, nearly two-thirds of the retreating party were killed by the Indians: and the scene of this terrible catastrophe along the lake shore southeast of Chicago was, for years, marked by the ghastly trophies of Indian barbarity.

Had there been sufficient inducements in the way of plunder, no doubt the Upper Mississippi, then at the mercy of the British forces, backed by their savage allies, would have presented a repetition of these scenes of war and massacre. But the settlements were sparse, and difficult of access, besides offering little substantial results for the dangers to be incurred. St. Louis, then the military headquarters of the United States forces, was far distant and too strongly manned to justify an attack by the limited means at the command of the British outposts. Hence, with the

exception of occasional Indian skirmishes in the vicinity of the settlements above and below St. Louis — in which the well-known warrior, Black Hawk, took a prominent part — we have little to note in the way of historical incident pertaining to this immediate section of country till the year 1814. At this time, the success which had attended the American arms in the defeat of the Indians under Tecumseh, Perry's victory on Lake Erie, and the retaking of Detroit, induced the United States military authorities at St. Louis to give some attention to securing the important military position at Prairie du Chien, then threatened by the British forces at Mackinaw. Accordingly, in the spring of 1814, some gunboats were sent up with a view to protect the feeble garrison then engaged in enlarging their means of defence. But before these arrangements could be properly carried out, a British military expedition, composed largely of Indian traders, clerks, and employes in the interest of the English fur-trading companies, with the usual complement of Indian savages, the whole being under command of Col. McKay, left Mackinaw, and by the usual traveled route made their appearance unexpectedly before the feeble Fort, and demanded its surrender. According to the most reliable authorities, this attack occurred on July 17th. Lieut. Perkins, the American officer in command of the Fort, at first declined to surrender, but after several days skirmishing, the supply of ammunition being nearly exhausted, and especially fears of a general Indian massacre in case of a successful assault, induced a capitulation on the fourth day. As soon after as practicable the American troops were sent down the river to St. Louis, being escorted as far as Rock river by a small company of British soldiers, to prevent them from Indian assault in their defenceless condition.

Before the fact of this capture was made known to the military authorities at St. Louis, Lieut. Campbell had been

sent with men and supplies to reinforce the feeble garrison. He had proceeded as far as Rock Island, where he had an interview with Black Hawk, who then claimed to be neutral, though unquestionably secretly espousing the cause of the British. Just after this interview, the news of the capture of Prairie du Chien was received by Black Hawk from an Indian runner, and deeming this a favorable opportunity to throw off his assumed neutrality, a party under the leadership of this celebrated chieftain started in pursuit of Campbell's party. They were overtaken while carelessly preparing for a noon repast, in the narrow channel separating Campbell's Island from the Illinois shore, one boat being fastened to the main bank, while another was anchored a short distance out in the stream. The attack was made by rapid firing from a concealed ambuscade, with a view to cut off and destroy the party in the shore boat. By great risk and exposure the boat in the current was tamed toward the shore, and the threatened land party transferred to it, when the shore boat was abandoned, and left to be plundered and burned by these treacherous savages. Lieut. Campbell, himself severely wounded in the encounter, as well as several of his men, finally made good their retreat, and returned to St. Louis to report the ill result of their expedition. This unfortunate commander has inadvertently secured permanent recognition of his disaster, by having his name affixed to what is still known as "Campbell's Island."

Doubtless from the representations made by Lt. Campbell on his return to St. Louis, as well as from other evidences of hostility on the part of the Indians on Rock river, a military expedition was fitted out in August, with a view to punish them, and if possible bring them to terms. The command of this expedition was confided to a no less important personage than Major Zachary Taylor, since president of the United States.

Major Taylor, with his well-manned fleet, anticipating of course an easy victory over the poorly equipped Indian warriors of Rock river, reached the scene of his operations just in front of the present city of Davenport, on a bright morning in August. Here he was considerably dismayed to find Indians dressed in British uniform on the Rock Island shore, manning two formidable pieces of artillery, set in a line with other *painted* guns, looking equally formidable at a distance. It would seem that Col. McKay, the capturer of Prairie du Chien, had anticipated this expedition, and accordingly taken measures to prevent any advances that might subsequently weaken his position at Prairie du Chien. Hence the first salute that Major Taylor received was a well-aimed shot, which struck without disabling the advance boat, which he himself occupied: a second shot took away the rudder of another boat, the painted guns, so far as we can learn, not doing much execution. The disabled boat was fast drifting toward the Iowa shore, where large parties of Indians were seen lurking in expectation of securing an easy prey.

In this critical juncture it was necessary for some one to cast a rope from the disabled boat in order that it might be taken in tow, and thus removed from imminent danger of capture by the Indians. This was courageously done by a young soldier named Paul Harpole, who, not satisfied with this proof of his bravery, stood up exposed to the fire of the Indians on the shore, and as loaded guns were handed to him, fired fourteen times into the crowd, doing evident execution; after the fourteenth fire, Harpole himself was shot in the forehead, and falling overboard, drifted to the shore, where the men on the retreating boats saw his body inhumanly cut to pieces. In the monument which Scott county, Iowa, proposes to erect to her fallen heroes during the late war, the name of Paul Harpole, and the date of August, 1814 should properly head the list, as com-

memorating the first American soldier that fell in the service of his country, on our Iowa soil. This retreat of Major Taylor (thirty-two years later the hero of Buena Vista,) can hardly be considered under the circumstances as any reflection on his military character; evidently it was not the painted guns that frightened him. We only learn further from one of the participants in this expedition that Major Taylor stopped for repairs on the Illinois shore, three miles below the mouth of Rock river, from which point he returned to St. Louis. It is hardly necessary to state that the account of this affair contained in "Davenport Past and Present" is in almost every item incorrect.

No doubt the circumstances attending this expedition, as well as the location of the populous Indian villages on Rock river, called attention to the position of Rock Island as a desirable point for the establishment of a frontier military post. Accordingly after the war, in 1816, Fort Armstrong was built and occupied, being so named after Gen. John Armstrong, the efficient secretary of war, under Madison's administration.

In the year 1823, Major Long's expedition to the sources of the St. Peters and the Red River of the North was carried out. The report of this exploration, published in London in 1825, gives an interesting view of the country along the line of travel, and is particularly full in its account of the Indian tribes of the northwest. The notice there given of Chicago fifty years ago does not compare very well with the accomplished result of half a century, and would excite the risibilities of a Chicagoan of 1873. It may be worth while to quote a few remarks here on this head as showing how scientific men may be often greatly deceived in their estimates. I quote from pp. 164-5-6, viz:—

"We were much disappointed at Chicago and its vicinity. We found in it nothing to justify the great eulogium lavished upon the place by a late traveler (Schoolcraft), who

observes that 'it is the most fertile and beautiful that can be imagined.' 'As a farming country,' says he, 'it unites the fertile soil of the finest lowland prairies with an elevation which exempts it from the influence of stagnant waters, and a summer climate of delightful serenity.' The best comment upon this description of the climate and soil is the fact that with the utmost vigilance on the part of the officers, it was impossible for the garrison, consisting of from seventy to ninety men, to subsist upon the grain raised in the country, although much of their time was devoted to agricultural pursuits. The difficulties which the agriculturist meets with are numerous; they arise from the shallowness of the soil, from its humidity, and from its exposure to the cold damp winds which blow from the lake, with great force during most of the year. The grain is frequently destroyed by swarms of insects. There are also a number of destructive birds, of which it was impossible for the garrison to avoid the baneful influence, except by keeping, as was practiced at Ft. Dearborn, a party of soldiers constantly engaged in shooting at the crows and black-birds, that committed depredations upon the corn planted by them. But even with all these exertions, the maize seldom has time to ripen, owing to the shortness and coldness of the season. The provisions of the garrison were for the most part conveyed from Mackinaw in a schooner, and sometimes they were brought from St. Louis, a distance of three hundred and eighty-six miles, up the Illinois and Des Plaines rivers.

"The appearance of the country near Chicago offers but few features upon which the eye of the traveler can dwell with pleasure. There is too much uniformity in the scenery; the extensive water prospect is a waste, unchecked by islands, unenlivened by the spreading canvass, and the fatiguing monotony of which is increased by the equally undiversified prospect of the land scenery, which affords no relief to the sight, as it consists merely of a plain, in which

but few patches of thin and scrubby woods are observed scattered here and there.

"The village presents no cheering prospect, as notwithstanding its antiquity, it consists of but few huts, inhabited by a miserable race of men, scarcely equal to the Indians, from whom they are descended. Their log or bark houses are low, filthy, and disgusting, displaying not the least trace of comfort. Chicago is perhaps one of the oldest settlements in the Indian country: its name, derived from the Pottawatamie language, signifies either a skunk or wild onion, and each of these significations has been occasionally given for it. A fort is said to have formerly existed there. Mention is made of the place as having been visited by Perrot, who found 'Chigogan' to be the residence of a powerful chief of the Miamis. The number of trails centering all at this spot, and their apparent antiquity, indicate that this was for a long time the site of a large Indian village. As a place of business, it offers no inducement to the settler: for the whole amount of trade on the lake did not exceed the cargo of five or six schooners, even at the time when the garrison received its supplies from Mackinaw.

"It is not impossible that at some distant day when the banks of the Illinois shall have been covered with a dense population, and when the low prairies which extend between that river and Fort Wayne shall have acquired a population proportionate to the produce they can yield, that Chicago may become one of the points in the direct line of communication between the northern lakes and the Mississippi; but even the intercourse which will be carried on through this communication, will, we think, at all times be a limited one. The dangers attending on the navigation of the lake, and the scarcity of harbors along the shores, must ever prove a serious obstacle to the increase of the commercial importance of Chicago. The extent of the sand banks which are formed on the eastern and southern shore, by

the prevailing north and northwest winds, will likewise prevent any important works from being undertaken to improve the port of Chicago."

Could the writer of this sketch, now after the lapse of less than fifty years, see the Chicago of the present day, the Queen City of the Lakes, he would be inclined to materially modify his views.

On this same expedition an examination was made of the natural water communication between the lake at Chicago and the head-waters of the Illinois leading to the Mississippi. In this examination and report we have the first intimation of the feasibility of an enterprise, as yet only partially realized, of direct water communication between Lake Michigan and the Mississippi river. I say *partially*, for the present Illinois and Michigan canal is not on the most direct route, and its capacity is limited to a single class of boats, not fitted either for river or lake traffic. But the problem itself, on which the producing interests of the Upper Mississippi Valley are so intimately dependent, was substantially solved when, on the 15th of July, 1871, by the deep cut of the summit level, the waters of Lake Michigan were caused to flow up the slimy bed of Chicago river, and pour their tribute on the Mississippi slope. With this grand feeder virtually drawing on the entire basin of the great lakes, what is there to prevent a direct water route of any capacity desired between the lakes and the Mississippi? *Time and money* (and, it is to be hoped, not too much of the former) is all that is now requisite to accomplish this important result.

But I have already far exceeded the limits originally designed for a brief address, though the subject itself, to do proper justice, would require volumes.

Thus, to conclude, from the fragmentary materials at my command, I have endeavored, at least, with honest zeal, to commemorate the deeds and labors of those early pio-

neers who have, for our benefit, planted the seeds of a better civilization in this magnificent valley. I have brought down my historic sketch within the memory of living men, and there leave it for other and abler hands to complete. The forms of those lately passed and now passing away, are too *palpable* — they touch too nearly the clashing interests of *to-day* ; they need the softening hand of Time to develop the permanent value of their works.—*They*, and *we*, must wait.

Price, 25 Cents.

Historical Address

ON THE

Early Exploration and Settlement of the Mississippi Valley.

BY C. C. PARRY, M. D.

LATE BOTANIST OF AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, D. C.

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